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TAGS: [KPKO](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA FIRM ON LEAVING ALGIERS PROCESS IF UN
SUPPORTS VIRTUAL DEMARCATION

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (S/NF) Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin called in Ambassador January 19 to emphasize that the Ethiopian leadership had met January 18 and decided that if the UN Security Council should adopt this week to accept the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) demarcation by map coordinates, or "virtual demarcation," then Ethiopia will leave the Algiers Peace Agreement process. Further, changing the mandate of the UN Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) to monitor the "virtual demarcation" would only underscore that the UN has exceeded its own position of remaining neutral on the border dispute and was now changing its role to become an "implementer" and "enforcer" of the EEBC decision. Seyoum stated that he wanted the UN to maintain its neutrality and to reaffirm its role of upholding the Algiers Peace and Cessation of Hostilities Agreements -- the fundamental agreements guiding the demarcation process -- which holds the parties as responsible for resolving their border dispute and to demarcate the border peacefully. End Summary.

ETHIOPIA CALLS FOR REAFFIRMATION OF THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENTS

12. (S/NF) Foreign Minister Seyoum and MFA Legal Advisor Minelik Alemu met the Ambassador to review the border process and Ethiopia's deep concern over the ongoing UN Security Council deliberations. Seyoum said he sent a letter to Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, in response to Eritrean

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President Isaias' letter to Algerian Ambassador Ettialhi, who serves as President of the Council for January, which outlines Eritrea's support for "virtual demarcation." Seyoum stated that his letter argues against "virtual demarcation." Further, the letter argued that the EEBC cannot demarcate the border by coordinates without the agreement of the parties. The Foreign Minister added that the EEBC is not a legal body; it is a creation of the parties to help with the delimitation and demarcation process of the border. Ultimately, it is up to the parties themselves to work together to resolve the border dispute. Seyoum and Minelik noted that EEBC President Sir Elihu Lauterpacht made this point at The Hague last year and added that it is the fundamental basis of the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2000.

13. (S/NF) Seyoum remarked to the Ambassador that Ethiopia's senior leadership met Friday, January 18 and decided that Ethiopia would withdraw from the Algiers peace agreement process should the UN accept "virtual demarcation" and order UNMEE to monitor the implementation of "virtual demarcation."

Seyoum remarked that the role of the UN Security Council must be one of neutrality, encouraging the parties to resolve themselves the border dispute and, more importantly, the fundamental problems that caused the border dispute. The UN should not change its role to one of being an implementer or enforcer of the EEBC decision. This would only force the parties to conflict.

14. (S/NF) UNMEE's role is important, but it should be one of monitoring the border, not monitoring the implementation of "virtual demarcation." This would change the purpose and role of UNMEE beyond its original intent of monitoring the border according to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Finally, Seyoum noted with anguish that the UN was ignoring its own resolutions by equating Eritrea's takeover of the neutral Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) that divides the two parties with Ethiopia's movement of troops closer to the border, which, the Foreign Minister argued, was in response to Eritrea's provocation of arming the neutral and demilitarized TSZ.

LEAVING THE ALGIERS PROCESS, UPHOLDING THE AGREEMENTS

15. (S/NF) Seyoum made it clear that Ethiopia was deeply concerned by the deliberations in New York and would leave the Algiers peace agreements process. This is not their

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desire, because tensions, which are already high, could increase and lead to conflict. In this regard, Seyoum made it clear that Ethiopia had publicly stated its commitment not to use force against Eritrea in the resolution of the border dispute, in accordance with the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Eritrea has not made a similar commitment since the signing of the agreement in 2000. Ethiopian forces have restrained from responding to Eritrea's increasing and more violent provocations along the border. In this context, Seyoum expressed deep frustration with the UN and international community for not criticizing Eritrea for these provocations and for Eritrea's blatant violation of the agreements and UN resolutions by occupying and arming the neutral TSZ as well as restricting UNMEE and UN operations. Ethiopia has done neither, Seyoum asserted.

COMMENT

16. (S/NF) In twelve years of working with the Ethiopians (as well as Eritreans), it is clear to the Ambassador that Foreign Minister Seyoum and the rest of the Ethiopian leadership are deeply frustrated and angered with the perception of the lack of understanding of Ethiopia's position by the international community and will take action.

Ethiopia has argued that before demarcation or resolution of the border can be realized, the parties must resolve the fundamental issues which gave rise to the dispute. Demarcation of the border alone will not address the underlying problems and only cause renewed conflict. General Gordon, the British commander of UNMEE in 2003, articulated the necessity for the parties to meet directly to discuss, not the delimitation/demarcation decision/process, but how to address divided towns and villages, the issues of consular access, property rights and citizenship. More fundamental, the parties must address the reasons for the border dispute before demarcation can be implemented peacefully.

17. (S/NF) Should Ethiopia drop out of the process, it would

increase tensions and direct the parties towards a greater possibility for renewed war. The debate at the UN should not be focused on the EEBC decision, but on past shared commitment to help the parties avoid conflict and address their problems themselves. Finally, past UN resolutions clearly focused on the parties maintaining their commitments to the Algiers Peace and Cessation of Hostilities Agreements -- the fundamental agreements guiding the resolution of the border dispute. Ethiopia's change of position from its commitment made prior to the EEBC process that it would uphold the EEBC's delimitation and demarcation determinations as final and binding and Eritrea's deployment of its troops and artillery into the TSZ along with its restrictions on UNMEE operations and safety of its personnel have increased tensions and pushed the parties closer to conflict.

Ambassador and post have encouraged the Ethiopians not to respond militarily to Eritrean provocations and to remain in the Algiers Process. Eritrea's increasing military provocations, such as on December 26, makes our efforts difficult. UN actions supporting "virtual demarcation" will most likely send the Ethiopians over the edge, making conflict more likely and Ethiopian restraint unlikely. End Comment.

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